

Identity construction through language: the case of the Turkish language reform

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Abstrak

ABSTRACT

After the fall of the Ottoman Empire, the Republic of Turkey was founded in 1923, and the new regime aimed to construct a national identity through a series of reforms. Among them, one statesponsored project was culturally significant: the Turkish Language Reform. Two institutions, the Turkish Historical Society and the Turkish Linguistic Society, helped to legitimize the language reform and construct a new cultural identity for the citizens of the new nationstate. The Turkish Language Reform, arguably the most radical of all Kemalist reforms, has been a successful component of the republican social engineering project. This paper examines the centrality of the language issue in the Kemalist nationbuilding effort and the role of the two abovementioned institutions in the process. The Turkish Language Reform remains one of the most effective state interventions on language. The present paper explores the reasons behind the reforms success and the importance of language as a marker of national identity.